



ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

10 May 2012

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor Anthony Smith (*Chair*)

Mr David Ashton	Dr Christine Hoffman
Professor David Bogle	Dr Arne Hofmann
Professor Robert Brown	Professor Raymond MacAllister
Mr Neil Chowdhury	Ms Helen Matthews
Dr Brenda Cross	Professor Alan Penn
Dr Caroline Essex	Dr Hilary Richards
Professor Mike Ewing	Dr Ruth Siddall
Professor David Green	Ms Olga Thomas
Mr Marco Federighi	Ms Susan Ware
Professor Anthony Finkelstein	

In attendance: Ms Karen Barnard; Mr Jason Clarke (*Secretary*);
Ms Harriet Lilley; and Mr William Wilson.

Apologies for absence were received from: President and Provost; Dr Bob Barber;
Ms Sue Bryant; Professor Steve Caddick; Dr Helen Chatterjee; Mr Luke Durigan;
Professor Nikos Konstantinidis; Mr Tim Perry; and Professor Michael Worton.

Key to abbreviations:

AB	Academic Board
AC	Academic Committee
AM	Annual Monitoring
CEO	Committee for Equal Opportunities
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSS	Corporate Support Services
DLTS	Departmental Learning and Teaching Strategy
FT	full-time
FTC	Faculty Teaching Committee
FTE	full-time equivalent
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Record
PGTA	Postgraduate Teaching Assistants
PIASG	Post-Institutional Audit Steering Group
PT	part-time
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QMEC	Quality Management and Enhancement Committee
RAS	Registry & Academic Services
SLC	Student Loans Company
SPS	Student Psychological Services
SWWG	Student Welfare Working Group

42 **MINUTES**

Approved

42.1 The Minutes of the meeting of AC held on 22 March 2012 [AC Mins. 28-41, 2011-12], were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

43 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

[See also Minute 44 below]

43A **Semesterisation**

[AC Min.30A, 2011-12]

Noted

43A.1 The final report on the above had been submitted to the Provost for his consideration.

43B **Development of a 'Policy Zone'**

[AC Min.30B, 2011-12]

Noted

43B.1 Discussions regarding the possible development of a 'Policy Zone' on the UCL website were ongoing and a report would be made to AC in due course.

43C **UCL International Strategy**

[AC Min.31, 2011-12]

Noted

43C.1 The draft International Strategy had been amended in light of comments made by AC at its previous meeting. The revised Strategy was then approved by the Provost, as Chair of AB acting on behalf of the Board, and then submitted to, and endorsed by, Council at its meeting on 4 April 2012. The final version of the Strategy, which would reflect issues raised by Council during its discussion, would be submitted to Council for final approval.

43D **Student Feedback Data Overview Report**

[AC Min.36, 2011-12]

Noted

43D.1 A presentation on the findings of the Student Barometer and International Student Barometer surveys would be made to AC at its next meeting.

43E **Annual Monitoring**

[AC Min.37, 2011-12]

Noted

43E.1 The Faculty of Laws had submitted its AM summary to the QMEC officers.

43E.2 At its last meeting, AC had received an oral report from the Chair of QMEC on key issues to emerge from this year's AM round. The QMEC officers were discussing a number of issues which had been identified by faculties in their Annual Monitoring reports with relevant CSS officers in order to agree how those issues could be addressed. The outcome of those discussions would inform QMEC's written report to AC on AM, which would be submitted to AC at its next meeting.

44 DEPARTMENTAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Noted

44.1 Academic departments had been requested to submit updated DLTSs to the Office of the Vice-Provost (Education). DLTSs were received from most departments and were reviewed by a small group chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair.

Received

44.2 At APPENDIX AC 4/26 (11-12) – a report from the DLTS Review Group.

44.3 An oral report by the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair.

Reported

44.4 The DLTS Review had been undertaken in order to (i) identify common themes and issues experienced by departments, and (ii) highlight how the Vice-Provost (Education) and his office could best support departments in relation to learning and teaching and related matters. Common themes arising from the Review included: inadequate teaching spaces; varying use of PGTAs by departments; and an increased interest in providing short courses and CPD programmes. The Review had also identified that some departments had not taken note of key institutional priorities set out in the UCL White Paper 2011-2021. Finally, there were issues with the DLTS template and accompanying guidance that would need to be resolved before any future iteration of the process. The Vice-Provost (Education) invited comments from AC members on the DLTS initiative and suggestions as to how this might be improved.

Discussion

44.5 Some members of AC commented that the format of the template and the accompanying guidance could be improved, if it was to aid genuine reflection and strategy formulation within departments. In particular, the long questionnaire was unhelpful as it restricted responses and inhibited proper discussion.

44.6 Members noted the following regarding the use of PGTAs:

- In some departments, PGTAs were employed to deliver large parts of undergraduate modules, and in some cases were not supported fully in that task by academic members of staff. There was also variation in the training provided to PGTAs.
- Undergraduate students paying higher fees might be critical of an increase in the use of PGTAs for the delivery of teaching, although the same students also often favoured smaller classes and more contact hours which was made possible by the use of PGTAs;

- PGTA activities provided postgraduate students with valuable training opportunities and teaching experience. UCL should ensure that in all cases, the scheme benefitted both the students being taught and the PGTAs themselves; it should not be used as simply as an economical way of releasing academic staff from teaching duties.
- It was noted that different faculties adopted different business models and, therefore, the extent to which they make use of PGTAs might also vary. AC agreed that while the PGTA scheme should be sufficiently flexible to reflect legitimate local differences, there was a need to ensure that a common standard of training, support and guidance applied across UCL. It was agreed that the existing guidelines on the use of PGTAs¹ should be reviewed to ensure that common threshold standards are applied across the university.

RESOLVED

- 44.7 That AC welcome the report from the DLTS Review Group at APPENDIX AC 4/26 (11-12)

[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith, Ms Clare Goudy – to note]

- 44.8 That the Head of the Graduate School, in liaison with relevant officers, undertake a review of the current guidance to heads of department on the use of PGTAs and report back to AC in due course.

[ACTION: Professor David Bogle]

45 **LEAD OFFICER REPORTS**

[AC Min.34, 2010-11]

Noted

- 45.1 One of the recommendations approved by Council following the 2010 review of the UCL committee system was that in certain cases where a standing committee was to be disestablished, a 'Lead Officer' arrangement would be put in place. Under such an arrangement, the officer(s) with key responsibility for an area previously covered by a standing committee would, *inter alia*, prepare an annual report on developments within that area, which would be submitted to AC, AB and Council.
- 45.2 Lead officer arrangements were in place for the following areas:
- Careers and Employability;
 - Student Accommodation;
 - Student Welfare Co-ordination;
 - Research Strategy.
- 45.3 AC received and considered the Lead Officer reports on the above areas (with the exception of Research Strategy – see item 45D below) prior to their submission to AB and Council.

¹ Secretary's Note: The current guidance 'Guidance to Heads of Departments on Providing Teaching Opportunities for Postgraduate Research Students and Early Career Research Staff', which was approved by AC at its meeting on 18 March 2008, is available at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/guidance_to_teaching.php

45A **CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY**

[Ms Karen Barnard, Head of the Careers Service, attended for this item]

Received

45A.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/27 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability, prepared by the Head of the Careers Service.

45A.2 An oral report by Ms Karen Barnard, Head of the Careers Service.

Reported

45A.3 Ms Barnard noted the following in particular in her oral report:

- This Lead Officer report detailed progress on careers and employability one year into the two-year plan. The objectives in the report were more proactive in comparison to previous years.
- Key objectives for 2011-13 included: developing further the UCL Talent Bank; embedding careers support in academic departments; developing departmental careers webpages for undergraduate students; provision of information and expectations of employability and careers support at UCL to prospective students and their parents/guardians; supporting alumni using the GradClub service; developing further the Skills4Work website and the provision of advice to international/postgraduate/research students.
- Many of the objectives of the Careers Services were consonant with the strategic aims set out in the UCL White Paper 2011-21.
- Results from the Association of Graduate Recruiters' Graduate Recruitment Survey 2012 showed that, contrary to media reports, the number of graduate vacancies in 2010-11 was stable and was likely to remain so for 2011-12. Survey results also highlighted that approximately one third of business surveyed did not fill their graduate vacancies in 2011 as many applicants did not possess the right skills.
- Key objectives for 2012-13 included: further embedding the GradClub and measuring its impact; increasing, where possible, the number of careers consultants based in academic departments, similar to the model used by the Faculty of Laws; further promote and develop facilitating optional and compulsory student placements for UCL programmes, including the BASc; completing the Skills4Work website and developing a skills award, mapped to the Global Citizenship attributes.
- Initial data provided by HESA on the Destination of Leavers showed an increase in unemployment for Masters students from the EU. Detailed HESA data would be made available to departments in the next few weeks.
- Data on activities in the Careers Service, provided at Appendix 3 of the Lead Officer report, predominantly showed an increase in the use of Careers Services' activities and services. Student attendance at employer-led activities had increased significantly.

Discussion

45A.4 AC welcomed the comprehensive and informative Lead Officer report and commended the Careers Service for its work.

- 45A.5 The Head of the Graduate School commented that some Research Councils would require research students to take internships in two years time and a scheme was being set up to ensure this would be in place. It was likely that the internship requirement would be adopted by all of the Research Councils in due course.

RESOLVED

- 45A.6 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Careers and Employability at APPENDIX AC 4/27 (11-12).

**[ACTION: Ms Karen Barnard, Mr Tim Perry
(as Secretary to Council) – to note]**

45B STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

[Mr William Wilson, Director of Student Accommodation, attended for this item]

Received

- 45B.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/28 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation, prepared by the Director of Student Accommodation.
- 45B.2 An oral report by Mr William Wilson, Director of Student Accommodation.

Reported

- 45B.3 Two discernible trends in student accommodation had emerged over the past few months. First, an active market in the provision of student accommodation was developing, with a number of new providers entering the market (some of whom had little or no experience of the specific issues involved in providing student accommodation). UCL would be working with these new providers where appropriate. Second, after a period of stable accommodation costs, there had been a noticeable increase in the cost of accommodation with the average price of a standard room increasing to £145 per week for a 50 week contract. It was highly possible that some students would face financial hardship as a result of these increases. Postgraduate students were more likely to opt for lower cost accommodation further away from UCL, compared to undergraduate students who tended to prefer more expensive accommodation closer to the main UCL campus.

Discussion

- 45B.4 The fact that the SLC allocates loans to students in equal instalments but student have to pay their rents in unequal instalments (currently two large payments and one small payment) might be causing anxiety for students in how they manage their finances – some Faculty Tutors reported an increase in the number of students seeking help due to financial worries. It was noted that students who are unable to meet rent deadlines could be eligible for financial assistance from UCL's hardship funds. However, the Medical and Postgraduate Students Officer noted that many students did not appear to be aware of this. It was suggested that aligning rent payments with SLC loan payments would address the underlying issue. The AC Chair noted that, within the context of the UCL White Paper 2011-21 which puts students at the heart at UCL, he would explore this issue further with the relevant officers and the UCL Union.

- 45B.5 AC welcomed the report and requested that future reports should include statistics on students reporting financial problems in meeting accommodation costs.

RESOLVED

- 45B.6 That AC welcome approve the Lead Officer report on Student Accommodation at report APPENDIX AC 4/28 (11-12).

[ACTION: Mr William Wilson, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]

- 45B.7 That future Lead Officer reports on Student Accommodation should include statistics on students reporting financial difficulties due to accommodation costs.

[ACTION: Mr William Wilson]

- 45B.8 That the Vice-Provost (Education)/AC Chair explore with relevant officers the feasibility of aligning student accommodation payments with SLC student loan payments.

[ACTION: Professor Anthony Smith]

45C **STUDENT WELFARE CO-ORDINATION**

Received

- 45C.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/29 (11-12) – the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination, prepared by the Dean of Students (Welfare).

- 45C.2 An oral report by Dr Ruth Siddall, Dean of Students (Welfare).

Reported

- 45C.3 The Dean of Students (Welfare) had established the Student Welfare Working Group, which meets biannually and acts as a forum for colleagues from different areas of UCL to meet and discuss trends and good practice in student welfare issues. The Dean of Students (Welfare) requested that the membership of the SWWG be expanded to include more students and academic staff. She also requested that the (former) Student Welfare Co-ordinating Committee be reinstated.

- 45C.4 Student demand for welfare support services continues to increase – approximately 10% of UCL students are registered with Student Psychological Services, which was a worrying trend. In order to deal with the increasing number of students seeking support, SPS would be recruiting a 0.2FTE psychiatrist, and a number of PT and FT therapists. Taught postgraduate students appeared most likely to register with SPS. Some students taking Masters programmes had chosen to do so due to difficulties in securing employment in the current economic climate. However, some of these students appeared to be less prepared for the academic requirements of advanced study. Issues from European and international students who sought support from SPS tended to be related to isolation, anxiety and depression.

- 45C.5 In Autumn 2011, there was an instance of student suicide – although the student was known to SPS, the suicide was unexpected. The Dean of Students (Welfare) thanked the Chaplin for her support for staff and students. There had also been one case of meningitis but infection had not spread and the student recovered quickly.

- 45C.6 There had been a worrying increase in the number of complaints regarding homophobic and racist harassment from students, and some minority groups had informed the Office of the Dean of Students (Welfare) that they felt 'unsafe' at UCL. Although equalities training was available for staff at UCL, there was no similar system in place for students. E-learning modules on equality and diversity had been commissioned and it was hoped that these would be piloted over the summer, and if successful, would be rolled out for the 2012-13 session as part of the new student induction activities.
- 45C.7 The UCL Union Rights and Advice Centre had also experienced an increase in the number of students seeking advice and support, especially as it now deals with student immigration matters. The Centre has three FTE staff and given the increase in student demand, UCLU might benefit from discussing staffing requirements in the Centre further. The Dean of Students (Welfare) thanked Ms Hameera Saeed, Manager of the UCL Union Rights and Advice Centre.
- 45C.8 The SWWG was concerned that the Gower Place medical practice would be relocated, as outlined in the UCL Estate Masterplan, once its lease expires in 2014. The practice has approximately 13,500 UCL students registered and has been of extreme importance in providing support and advice for UCL in cases of medical emergencies *eg* in cases of meningitis. The SWWG was unanimous in agreeing that a space must be found for the practice on the campus.

Discussion

- 45C.9 AC welcomed the report and agreed that the Dean of Students (Welfare) should expand the membership of the SWWG as she saw fit. The separate issue of the possible reinstatement of the former SWCC would be considered as part of the review of AC and its substructure [Minute 49 refers].
- 45C.10 AC commended the work done by SPS and was pleased to note the increase in SPS staffing. AC noted that the issue of the location of the Gower Place practice had been flagged in the Dean's report in 2011 and reiterated its support for this key student service remaining on the UCL campus.
- 45C.11 Members were concerned about the increase in complaints of harassment on grounds of religion, race and sexuality and suggested that UCL consider a forum to discuss how to respond to such politicalisation and radicalisation of these issues. The Race, Religion and Equalities Champion, Professor Anthony Finkelstein, commented that broad issues regarding the above were under discussion at UCL, but that individual issues should be directed to him in the first instance and where necessary a working group would be established to discuss particular race/religion/equalities issues further.
- 45C.12 It was recognised that some postgraduate students who have decided to pursue further study after having been made redundant after a long period in employment may face particular difficulties in returning to education and UCL should make sure that student support is adapted to meet the needs of these students. Personal Tutors should be given access to training on supporting mature students who have been out of education for a long time and on gearing careers advice to the needs of these students. It was noted that tailored support could be provided by a programme similar to the Transitions Programme for undergraduate students.

45C.13 Members of AC were concerned about the increase in the numbers of students dealing with stress and suggested that, and, in addition to tailoring support for mature Masters students, all departments should have embedded support available to all students.

45C.14 In response to a comment that UCL should be more flexible in managing arrangements such as exam timetables to help students suffering from high levels of stress, the Director of Student Services noted that the number of requests for special assessment arrangements had increased significantly but that these were often submitted at very short notice which made it less likely that such requests could be met.

45C.15 It was noted that the number of student cases being referred to Faculty Tutors and Personal Tutors involving mental health issues, including eating disorders, had increased. AC agreed that the Dean of Students (Welfare) should meet with the Dean of Students (Academic), the Director of Student Services, Faculty Tutors and any other relevant officers to look at the types of student cases which were being referred to staff and how these might be addressed.

RESOLVED

45C.16 That AC approve the Lead Officer report on Student Welfare Co-ordination at Accommodation at report APPENDIX AC 4/29 (11-12).

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Mr Tim Perry (as Secretary to Council) – to note]

45C.17 That AC reiterate its support for the Gower Place medical practice remaining on the UCL campus.

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall – to note]

45C.18 That the Dean of Students (Welfare), the Dean of Students (Academic) and the Director of Student Services meet with Faculty Tutors and any other relevant officers to discuss student health-related cases and to consider how these can be managed.

[ACTION: Dr Ruth Siddall, Professor Mike Ewing, Mr David Ashton]

45D RESEARCH STRATEGY

Noted

45D.1 Following the disestablishment of the Research Strategy Committee, it was agreed that the Vice-Provost (Research) would assume Lead Officer responsibility for this area of activity. AC therefore received at its May 2011 meeting a Lead Officer report from the Vice-Provost (Research), along with the Lead Officer reports for the areas above, which were then submitted to AB and Council at their subsequent meetings. Since then, a new reporting arrangement had been introduced for academic Vice-Provosts, under which they each submit a report annually to Council on matters falling within their remit. Consequently, the Vice-Provost (Research) would now be submitting a report to Council at its November meeting on issues relating to UCL's Research Strategy and related activities and initiatives. Following discussion between the AC and Council officers and the Vice-Provost (Research), it was agreed that in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of reporting and information, the Lead Officer

report on Research Strategy could be combined with the Vice-Provost's annual report to Council. The Lead Officer report from the Vice-Provost (Research) will therefore be submitted to, in turn, AC, AB and Council at their meetings in the Autumn Term 2012.

46 **PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE HEAR WORKING GROUP**

Received

- 46.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11) – a progress report from the working group established by AC to take forward the development of the HEAR.
- 46.2 An oral report by Professor Mike Ewing, as Chair of the Working Group.

Reported

- 46.3 Staff in RAS and UCLU had undertaken much of the work in progressing the HEAR at UCL. The HEAR Working Group was at this stage considering the types of activities which should be included on the HEAR. Professor Ewing drew the Committee's attention to item 11(g) on the progress report at APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11), and suggested that where departments ran their own activities, such as volunteering, the department should consider liaising with the Volunteering Services Unit so that the activity could be recorded centrally for the HEAR. The impact of the HEAR would be known in a few years, when the first cohort of students using the system had graduated.

Discussion

- 46.4 It was suggested that activities not covered by, or which did not easily fit into, the HEAR activity types might be recorded using an 'Other' category, although it would be necessary for UCL to be able to validate any such activities as qualifying for inclusion on the HEAR.

RESOLVED

- 46.5 That AC approve the progress report from the HEAR Working Group at APPENDIX AC 4/30 (10-11).

47 **REFORM OF A-LEVELS**

Reported

- 47.1 The Chair reported that following the Education Secretary's announcement that universities should play a larger role in determining the content of A-Levels to ensure they were fit-for-purpose, there would be discussions between Russell Group universities and examination boards. UCL had already been contacted by the AQA and Pearson to discuss how they could work together with universities.

48 **COMMITTEE FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES – ANNUAL REPORT FOR SESSION 2010-11**

Noted

48.1 Under its terms of reference, the CEO submits an annual report to Council *via* AC.

Received

48.2 At APPENDIX AC 4/31 (11-12) - the CEO's annual report for session 2010-11, which summarised the activities and developments within the Committee's purview for the 2010-11 session and identifies the future plans for the Committee.

RESOLVED [for recommendation to Council]

48.3 That AC endorse the CEO annual report for 2010-11.

49 **REFORM OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSTRUCTURE**

Noted

49.1 As part of the programme of follow-up action implemented following the QAA's Institutional Audit of UCL in March 2009, AC's Post-Institutional Audit Steering Group carried out on AC's behalf a review of AC and its sub-structure. At its meeting in March 2010, AC received and approved a report from PIASG proposing changes to AC's committee sub-structure; those changes took effect from session 2010-11.

49.2 The AC officers would be convening a meeting with relevant committee officers to review the effectiveness of the reforms which were introduced in autumn 2010. The review meeting would also provide an opportunity to discuss the *locus* of responsibility within the committee structure for student welfare and student experience issues. A report on the outcomes of the review meeting would be made to the next meeting of AC.

[ACTION: Mr Jason Clarke]

50 **REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS ETC OF ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

Noted

50.1 The AC officers had received on behalf of AC, since the last meeting of AC, Minutes of the following:

- Committee for Equal Opportunities - 24 January 2012;
- Education Committee - 14 March 2012;
- Joint Staff Student Committee - 23 February 2012;
- Library Committee - 19 March 2012;
- Quality Management and Enhancement Committee - 13 March 2012;
- Research Degrees Committee - 7 March 2012.

51 **FACULTY TEACHING COMMITTEES**

Received

- 51.1 At APPENDIX AC 4/32 (11-12) - a list of the meetings of FTCs of which the Minutes had been received by the AC Secretary on behalf of AC since the Committee's meeting on 22 March 2012.

52 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted

- 52.1 The next meeting of AC will take place on **Thursday 5 July 2012** at **9.00am** in the **Haldane Room**.

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